

Wihil obstat MICHAEL HICKEY, S.T.D Censor Dep.

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Miscellanea.

To all the readers and friends of The Cross we heartily wish an abundant share of

Christmas and its Memories

Christmas blessings. May that peace which surpasseth all understanding abide in their hearts and remain with them for ever.

In the churches and homes of Ireland the festival of the Nativity of our Divine Lord will be celebrated with that traditional reverence ever associated with the birthday of the world's Redeemer. The memory of our Saviour's advent and its attendant circumstances will

help once more to stimulate our fervour and renew our hope. The glories of Christmas will exercise a potent influence in dispelling our sorrows and lightening the burden which weighs heavily on a great Catholic Nation. Our trust in the Providence of God and in His justice will sustain us and give us courage to persevere in our devotion to our holy Faith and the interests of Fatherland, both of which are inseparably entwined. The destinies of nations rest not with the will of man but with that Supreme Ruler upon Whom everything depends. Clinging closely to the traditions of our religion and our race—the race of the Gael—we hail the coming of Christmas confident in the belief that it will cheer us on and sustain us until "the Star of the West shall yet rise in its glory."

The birth of Our Divine Lord was not always celebrated on the 25th of December. According to Clement of Alexandria certain Egyptian theologians placed it. on the 25th Pachon; that is to say, the 20th of May. Others placed it on the 24th or 25th Pharmuthi, in other words, the 19th or 20th of April. The 28th of March has been also assigned to it, the date on which the material sun is said to have been created. It was a common belief in early times that Christ was born on the 6th of January, thirteen days before the winter solstice. This belief is said to have been in part owing to various codices (e.g., Codex Bezae) having wrongly rendered the Divine words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased "-spoken at the baptism of Our Lord—as "Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I begotten thee." It is certain that Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Both Irenæus and Tertullian omit it from their list. It reached Egypt between 427 and 433. In the sermons preached by Emesa, before Cyril of Alexandria, in 433, there is evidence that the December festival was then firmly established there. Chrysostom, ordained by Flavian in 386, argued in favour of the 25th of December being the true date of Christ's birth; that Zachary, who, as High Priest, entered the Temple on the Day of Atonement, must, therefore, have received the announcement of St. John's conception in September; that six months later Christ was conceived, that is to

say, in March, and, consequently, born in December. From the fourth century every Western Calendar assigns the 25th of that month as the date of His birth.

* * * *

It was on Christmas Day, in the year 800, that Pope Leo the Third crowned Charlemagne head of the Holy Roman Empire. The ceremony took place in the church of St. Mary Major during the clebration of the third Mass. From that out it became a favourite date for court ceremonies. William of Normandy was crowned at Westminster on Christmas Day. An insult on Christmas Day was deemed more deadly than on any other. This is supposed to have been the reason that Magnus, King of Norway, in 1098, sent his shoes to King Murecard of Ireland, with orders to carry them through his palace on Christmas Day, in the presence of the Norwegian ambassadors, as a sign that he acknowledged himself to be his subject. The Irish king told the Norwegians present that he was ready not only to carry their master's shoes, but was quite prepared to swallow them, too, before he would allow him to conquer a single province of Ireland.

* * * *

It is appropriate at this season to direct attention to the duty of our people to adorn their

Catholic Art in the Home. homes with pictures that become the sacredness of the Catholic home. Why are the inspiring pictures of

the Madonna absent from so many homes? No semi-atheistical views should be allowed to desecrate the Catholic home. A house without Catholic pictures is not a true Irish home, and certainly not a true Catholic home. In many places very sorry reproductions of questionable work usurp the rightful place of the triumphs of our Catholic Art. In such places the sweet charm and joy of the Christmas can hardly be found, for the spirit of winning innocence is quickly stifled by the "culture" that favours dubious aesthetics. Every home in Ireland owes much to our Faith, and now during the Christmas, the jubilee of the ordered world, every parlour should be ennobled by at least one Catholic picture, by one representation of our own unsurpassed religious Art

A depot for supplying goat's milk to baby out-door patients (writes a correspondent), as well as to those who have left The Milk hospital cured, is a pressing need. Question Its establishment would do much to stem the dreadful tide of infant mortality, said to be more appalling in Dublin than in any other city of Europe. Goat's milk is much valued in France. At the sound of the goat-herd's pipe, women, and especially those with delicate children, come hurrying to their doors with jugs to be filled. Germany also fully realises the value of goat's milk for children. When several prominent Frenchmen protested, in the name of humanity, against the clause in the Peace Treaty compelling the Germans to surrender

140,000 milch cows and 10,000 goats, it was pointed

out that such an action would mean death to thousands

The late Augusta Holmes—a brief sketch of whose

An Irish

of infants.

career appeared in the February issue of The Cross-knew English perfectly, but considered it a bad Christmas Carol medium for singing, and preferred to write in French, which she called

"the language of her heart." Her "Noel d'Irlande" is one of the most popular Christmas carols in France. Is it because it is written in French that it is so little known in Ireland, where so many productions of the London music halls are on sale?

To remedy educational deficiencies, England sent a com-

Toy-Making as an Irish Industry

mission to the Continent, in 1882, to see what foreign schools could teach her. So far as Iteland was concerned the sole result of the inquiry was a

suggestion of toy-making as a possible industry for an Irish village, and although nothing seems to have ever come of the idea it is curious to find a German, Victor Zorn, making a precisely similar suggestion in 1919. He tells us that, before the war, the Thuringian doll industry gave employment to over 50,000 hands, but that now Japanese enterprise threatens the ruin of German trade in this as well as in

other things. In his opinion Germany's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity. "The natural conditions of Ireland," he writes, "her nearness to the markets for the necessary raw products, and the possibilities of selling the ready article, without any restriction, in every part of the globe, make success assured. The undertaking would soon give employment to thousands of Irish workers, and not only in the doll and toy industry but also in allied trades."

NOEL!

HE bells were ringing once again Of "Peace on earth; goodwill to men"; Of Bethlehem, of that blest morn In ages past, when Christ was born. Their music sounded far and near, The saddened heart they helped to cheer; They mingled with the laughter gay Of little ones that Christmas Day. And on and on those sweet chimes rang, In tuneful melody they sang Of Angel choirs, of God's bright star, Of shepherds guided from afar, And ever 'midst their music woke A golden memory that spoke Of days long past, of friendship fond, Of loved ones in the great "beyond." To-day they ring the same refrain, To work and wait, to watch and pray, 'Till each in turn shall pass away. For we have souls to guard, to save; And so He came, that Heavenly Babe, Upon this earth for us to live, That God, His Father, might forgive, Upon this earth to suffer pain, That we might rise from sin again; Upon the Cross for us to die, That we might reach His Home on high. Oh! let us then our offerings bring To Jesus, to this new-born King! A soul that's free from sin and pure, A heart that suffering can endure. Let us by acts of piety Draw near and nearer Lord to Thee, And hail this day that gave Thee birth As one, the happiest on earth! Ring on, ye bells, ring as of yore, For Christmas dawns for us once more. Sing, mortals sing, with heart and voice, Rejoice with Heaven, oh! earth rejoice!

ISABEL BURKE.

Some False Ideals in Education.

By REV. H. E. G. ROPE, M.A.

THOSE who looked to see a speedy regeneration follow on the heels of the great war are disappointed. The world has indeed been roughly shaken, and even begins to perceive that many watchwords of the last age were but wrecker's lights, but still it shows no sign of returning to the true Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. It calls for a change of man-made compasses, but will not look to the Star of the Sea. Some hazy recognition of the supernatural it would fain concede, but no submission to the Vicar of Christ. Nolumus hunc regnare super nos. What will such a world make of education?

To a Catholic education without the Faith is really a contradiction in terms. There is one science of supreme importance which alone gives a relative importance to all others. To educate is to draw out and train man's faculties. To what end? What, but the end for which man was created? We are not our own. We belong entirely to God, who is our beginning and last end. It follows that any development of our faculties which does not lead Godward is but waste and destruction. Does mere secular knowledge lead Godward? On the contrary it puffeth up, it raises the barrier of pride against divine grace. This is not a drawing forth of the faculties, but a misleading; deducation as Ruskin called it, downward, deathward.

Do not some Catholics still speak and write as though mere secular knowledge were an inestimable boon? Without accepting his disparagement of mediæval knowledge (so wonderfully vindicated by Professor James J. Walsh, of Fordham University, New York) we may remember Father Tyrrell's admission that in "the age of Mother Juliana [of Norwich] the light of wisdom burned at least as clearly and steadily then as now; and it is by that light alone that the shades of unbelief can be dispelled. Of course, wisdom without knowledge must starve or prey on its own vitals, and this was the intellectual danger of the Middle Ages; but knowledge without wisdom is so much food un-

digested and indigestible; and this is the evil of our own day, when to be passably well-informed so taxes our time and energy as to leave us no leisure for assimilating the knowledge with which we have stuffed ourselves. (Faith of the Millions, Ser. ii, xiii, p. 5.)

Even from a secular standpoint the costly failure of our State venture should remind men of Newman's

warning:--

"Is it not a fact, for the truth of which we need not go to history or philosophy, when the humblest village may show us that those persons who turn out badly, as it is called—who break the laws first of society, then of their country—are commonly the very men who have received more than the ordinary share of intellectual cifts?" (University Semmons (1890) iv 60.1)

gifts?" (University Sermons (1890), iv, 60-1.)

It is hard to understand the abyssmal folly of the Nineteenth Century. "Educate, educate, educate," it cried with deafening insistence. Educate whom? How? To what end? "Educate everybody, develop them, uplift them." Whither? Whereunto? "To progress, to advance." Again, in Heaven's name, whither? A runaway cab horse progresses. So did the the swine of Gadara. But the age of railways disdained to pause for reflection. "Progress" was the watchword.

"Forward, forward, let us range,
"Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."

Well, it did spin, and the grooves rang, with a vengeance, and now we find ourselves—on the brink of anarchy! Ten years since a Catholic observer commented:

"It seems then, after thirty-nine years of wasted energy, we are beginning to suspect that the land is left bare of tillage because her sons and daughters are bred up to despise the simple pleasures of rural life, and are trained from their tenderest years by Press, Stage, Literature, and Schooling to regard the possession of Education as a boon which opens to its recipients all the treasures that the world can bestow. Hard it is, doubtless, to apportion to each its suitable meed of blame. That all contribute to a like result no English man or woman will dare to dispute. For, sheeplike, every scribbler, rhetorician, and statesman in turn

gabbles the same farrago in praising and holding up Education as the sole cure for all ill, and sole source

of national greatness and progress."*

The panacea of 1870—secular information, cramming—is now discredited by reflective persons as an ugly imposture, a ludicrous failure. Satire would be wasted upon the gospel to which "enlightened" England so long gave full credence. So far as they had any definite ideal it would seem that the men of 1870 desired a nation of clerks, despising agriculture and handicraft (and with these the wisdom and experience of all human generations). They succeeded, and now a naval accident may starve us; our boasted "liberty" has vanished, and brazen profiteers work their will upon us. Vana salus hominis.

We have souls to be sanctified and saved. How sanctified. By the duties of that state of life to which God has called us. And how if God calls us to be ploughmen? Shall we "better our position" in that case by becoming quill-drivers, or rather, typethumpers? Let us hear a wise and valiant woman:

"One of the greatest evils is that of making young, innocent, interesting girls, who would be farm-servants, or servants of some class or other, too refined, so that they are ashamed of the conversation of their poor parents, aim to be equal to those whom God has taught us to be subject to, and thus become easily the dupes of bad, designing men, who are unfaithful to their wives, to virtue, and to God." (Life of Mother Margaret Hallaham (1960) as 2027)

Hallahan (1869), p. 207.)

This idolising of a false refinement results in actual barbarism. In his Patriotism and Popular Education Mr. Henry Arthur Jones asks of what avail is it? If the scholars "have passed all sorts of standards, and know a little about Cicero, and a great deal about Miss Marie Corelli; if they have not been grounded in the knowledge and practice of the great permanent rules of life and conduct?" The Boy Scout movement has been far more educative, he claims, than the costly schools and boards of education, whose triumphs may be studied in their pupils' habits:

"The bulk and staple of our middle-class and lower middle-class entertainments are largely compact of dull

mediocrity, banality, tawdry sentiment, rank sensation, horribly vulgar sensual suggestion, and sheer imbecility. . . [Yet] it is here our masses are getting the education that is most operative upon their daily life—character."

"In a provincial town, some 50 years ago, a carpenter in his late middle age made with his own hands the whole of a large useful cabinet for a middle-class sitting-room. That cabinet, by its sound workmanship, its sensible shape, its fitness and utility, would utterly shame and condemn anything that a middle-class family could pay at furnishing shops in 1914, at three or four times its price. He was," Mr. Jones continues, "a thoroughly good carpenter of a numerous widely-spread class; such a carpenter can scarcely be found now."

Whereupon our author naturally asks: "Why is it that while before the advent [of Popular Education] it was almost impossible to get a piece of bad carpentry in lower and middle-class homes, it is now almost impossible to get a piece of good carpentry."*

Another point is very often forgotten or overlooked by such Catholics as look to the *Morning Post*, *Punch*, and Rudyard Kipling for mental and even spiritual

guidance:

"Non-Catholic writers on training and discipline are sometimes clergymen who confine themselves to what they call the Sermon on the Mount, ignore the Holy House of Nazareth, avoid the Passion, and have no use for dogma; sometimes they are schoolmasters and journalists who do not recognise the supernatural, and by praising up such merely natural virtues as courage, endurance, and drill, promote in the human heart a pride and self-sufficiency which is spiritual destruction; and sometimes they are sentimentalists who seem to hold that the end and purpose of all training and discipline is to make men Britons and to strengthen the British Empire." (Bp. Hedley, The Moral Training of Children (C.T.S., 1912), p. 2. Italics mine.)

(To be continued.)

^{*} Charles Weld-Blundell in "The Englishman," 17th March, 1909.

^{*} Quoted in Catholic Books Notes, August, 1919.

Life of Father Charles, C.P

EDITED BY A PASSIONIST FATHER.

CHAPTER XIII.

HIS DEVOTION TO THE HOLY SOULS.

LL those who had the happiness of knowing Father Charles were aware, as is evidenced by the preceding chapter, of the deep sympathy which he evinced for human suffering; they frequently saw tears within his eyes when he beheld those whom "the hand of the Lord hath touched," or when he listened to the tales of woe which were daily told to him; but very few, beyond the religious with whom he lived, were aware of the intensity of his devotion to the holy souls. Endowed with a vivid Faith, he realised in a high degree the nature of their pains, so much so, that the sight of fire always elicited a prayer for their deliverance.

Prayer for the dead, like many other dogmas of Faith, has been impugned by those outside the Fold, notwithstanding the numerous irrefragable proofs from Scripture, from reason, and from the

Fathers, of Purgatory's existence.

The Church, guiding her children during life, preaching to them the Baptism of Penance in this world does not forget the dead when the tomb has closed over their remains. She declares that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls detained therein are assisted by the prayers and suffrages of the faithful.

Death which dissolves the union between soul and body, does not, if the soul possesses the grace of God, cut us off from being members under the same Head, or from being "branches of the same Vine," for we are still united in the same mystical Body, under Christ our Lord. Throughout all Christendom "from the morning watch even until night," supplications ascend towards the Lamb, beseeching that the holy captives may be freed, and admitted to the Beatific Vision. In the Church's public prayer, there is invariably a memento for the dead. Even at the most solemn part of the Mass, when the lips of the priest have been cleansed, while the Victim lies on the altar, like another Isaias, he beseeches Christ to apply the merits of His Passion, and to allow His Precious Blood to descend on those in the "Furnace of Love;" so that speedily they may be received into the Bosom of God. Knowing that God will infallibly "judge justice," the most fervent even, and most self-sacrificing can scarcely expect immediate admission to the All-holy Presence. Hence the Church makes no distinction among her members, but prays alike for all. In solemn Councils, also, following the Divine Word, She has made Laws regarding the suffering souls; and generously, indeed, have these dictates been complied with. Wherever the spirit of Catholicity lives active and strong, wherever the lamp of Faith burns brightly, there suffrages for the dead are correspondingly numerous. In Ireland, happily, devotion to the holy souls is one of its people's most edifying traits. Those whom they have loved in life they do not forget in death, and the Rosary becomes the connecting link between the "dead past" and the "living present."

From every altar, as well as from the homes of the people, ascends daily "the voice of petition," beseeching the Most High to release "those that are in fetters;" and, when the thoughts of absent ones might naturally bring a cloud of sorrow, the recollection of an interchange of mutual help with those beyond the grave illumines with rays of heavenly consolation, and fills the heart with supernatural joy.

Works of mercy towards the dead grace the life of every saint; and the actions of the worldly-minded differ widely in this, as in many other respects, from those which are the outcome of sanctified lives. The pure of heart alone can realize how far spiritual aid transcends temporal—can realise the superiority of the one, the

inferiority of the other.

That Father Charles practised this devotion in a heroic degree, there can be no manner of doubt. Every action of his life, every prayer, every exhortation, every sacrifice was, so far as the discharge of duties would permit, applied solely to this end. While people in the busy world were, for the most part, devoting their energies to the pursuit of things vain and unprofitable, heedless of the one thing necessary, and forgetful of departed friends, whose voices were now silent, Father Charles never relaxed his efforts in pleading the cause of the members of the Church Suffering. This was his great life thought, to gaze in spirit on the "burning souls;" and it was closely associated with his inexpressible attachment to the Sacred Passion, and to the Dolours of our Blessed Lady. Whether in the church or in the choir, in the solitude of his cell, or when walking within the precincts of the Retreat, his continual prayer was for the suffering souls; and this meditation on their region of anguish provided a panacea for his own pains and afflictions, which were at all times by no means slight. Glowing with charity, he frequently flung himself down in the shadow of the Tabernacle, craving mercy and pardon for the "Prisoners of the King."

All who came to him were reminded of the thousands dying daily, many of the souls of whom were languishing in their banishment, and appealing to their friends on earth for pity. In speaking of them, pain was apparent in his countenance, and he invariably induced his fellow-religious, and all to whom he spoke, to accompany him in his recital of some indulgenced prayer on their behalf. Whenever it fell to his lot to take the Superior's place at the blessing of the religious before retiring for the night, he never failed to tell some little incident which turned their minds upon the subject he had so dearly at heart, directing their attention to the fact that even small imperfections deserved to be purified

in the flames of Purgatory.

What we have remarked is borne out by the following letter written by Father Charles from St. Anne's Retreat, Sutton, Lancashire, on the 3rd February, 1870:—

"I am at present engaged in obtaining suffrages and prayers for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and especially in procuring as

many as possible to make the Heroic Act.

Now, one good opportunity I have of benefiting the poor souls is afforded me by one of our Missionaries, who will get all the people on the missions to make the Heroic Act, and offer their works of satisfaction and indulgences during life for the suffering souls.

This movement cannot fail to obtain immense relief for the holy but afflicted souls, and for numbers of them the possession of eternal glory. It is truly one of the highest works of Faith and Charity in which we can engage."

In the foregoing he also expressed his intention of getting papers printed for distribution, so that the people might have some-

thing to remind them of their resolution in this regard.

As some of our readers may not understand fully what is meant by the Heroic Act, the subjoined extract may prove interesting:— "The Heroic Act of Charity consists in resigning the satisfactory part of our works, all indulgences and all suffrages, which will be offered for us after death, into the hands of the Blessed Virgin, to be distributed according to her good pleasure to the souls in Purgatory, whom she desires to free from their torments. We need not fear to do ourselves any injury. All that we give in charity to the souls of the faithful departed will be compensated by increase of grace in ourselves; and, after death, we shall find our merits multiplied a hundred-fold. We are by no means hindered from praying for ourselves or others, for we only give the satisfactory fruit of prayers and good works, but we keep the propitiatory and impetratory merit."

There is a difference between the satisfactory and meritorious value of good works. The former atones for sin—the latter obtains grace and glory hereafter. Strictly speaking, merits, graces, and virtues are incommunicable, and in the Heroic Act these are given to the Blessed Virgin to be beautified, and the satisfactions daily gained by our good works are voluntarily resigned into her hands to be employed for the greatest glory of God, and to bring

souls to sing His praises.

If our Lord made great promises to those who would relinquish all things to follow Him, what will be the reward to those who not only sever every tie, but even sacrifice their own actions and make an oblation of them through the hands of Mary? St. Augustine said, "I pray for the dead, that the dead released, may pray for me." Father Charles not only prayed for them, but, for their ransom, sacrificed the work of his life.

Among his private documents was found a draft of a letter, written to Father Provincial, dated 30th May, 1871, which affords another convincing proof of the devotion uppermost in his mind:—

"Last Saturday I received a letter from Holland written by my uncle. He mentions that about eight months ago a relative of mine died, who had been blessed with temporal prosperity, and had left her property to be divided into lawful portions among the members of the family. My share amounts to the sum of 259 guilders. The same comes to my other brothers and sisters, who are eight in number.

"I wish to have 100 Masses offered for the repose of the souls in Purgatory, according to my intention. I shall be very much obliged to your paternity if, in your great charity, you will grant me permission to do so."

After so many prayers, so many mortifications, so many works of mercy, done with such minute perfection, what a vast number of souls in Heaven must have been placed in possession of their eternal crowns by the intercessory prayers of Father Charles! And as these souls left the realms of pain to take possession of

their Father's home, they did not, we may be sure, in the excess of their joy, forget the supplicant by whose prayers the doors of their prison house had been opened. As they stood around the Great White Throne, amid the celestial choirs, it may be realised with what gratitude they, in turn, would beseech Heaven's choicest gifts for their benefactor, and with what eagerness they would await the ushering in, by angels, of their deliverer, to take his place for ever in their midst as a welcome partaker of their neverending joys.

(To be continued.)

SUNSET FROM O'CONNELL BRIDGE.

TOW might she seem The city of our dream, Apocalyptic, by the burnished stream:

Transfigured in the fire Of sunset, our desire: Strong citadel, to whom our souls aspire,

Espouséd, built foursquare, Irradiate in the glare Of afterglow, as in the brilliant air

Of Patmos rose the Bride Above a living tide. Dared we but hope her glory to abide—

Did not dark night befall— We might the stronghold call Jerusalem, the body mystical

Encompasséd with calm: Wherein, with robe and palm, Children of light proclaim the thronéd Lamb.

An Pilibin

Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of our Saviour, 1919.

"The Golden Milestone."

BY PATRICK WALSHE, B.A.

"At the window winks the flickering fire-light;
Here and there the lamps of evening glimmer,
Social watch-fires
Answering one another through the darkness."

INTER is not entirely a season of thunder and storm—many fine attractions shine midst the frost and snow, and many fine promises of human comfort and joy. Christmas, with its freedom, with its renewal of the great ties of nature and love, with all the luxuries of home, brightens the cold, ascetical days, and for a while lulls the tyranny of the elements.

In drear December the blazing hearth is like a kindly exorcist, banishing the spirit of cold and gloom, guarding the surroundings of human life. For a while nature ceases, as it were, to rival the attractions of home, and shows the need for family love and warmth. In winter, especially, the image of home is most deeply impressed on our imaginations, and most inseparable from our pleasures and joys. From the wild, dark night we hurry to the cheerful communion of relatives and friends, to the certainty of welcome and protection. The long, long nights almost surpass the charms of the protracted summer day—there is such an opportunity for recreative rest, and for the student whose thoughts wing their way gently over Pericles' Athens or over the antiquities of Egypt and Babylon. With the sparkling fire and burning lamps home becomes more and more a part of our existence, "the golden milestone,"

"The central point from which we measure every distance Through the gateways of the world around."

Under its protective roof with those we love, we feel complete independence of howling winds and piercing colds, a luxury midst tempest and rain. We feel as secure as a child in its mother's arms.

'And the night-wind rising, hark!

How above there in the dark
In the midnight and the snow
Ever wilder, fiercer, grander,
Like the trumpets of Iskander
All the noisy chimneys rattle."

The winter, however, has very different charms. Many find Shelley's delight in the wild west wind, that can "waken from his summer dreams the blue Mediterranean," and "for whose path the Atlantic's level powers cleave themselves into chasms." There is a might immeasurably greater than man's is the resistless storm that stirs such passion in the woods and in the tumbling waters on the uncontrolled ocean. Before such might man feels his weakness, and forms some conception of Omnipotence. More than poets can find something to admire in the

"Sire of storms whose savage ear The Lapland drum delights to hear."

In the snow-flakes, too, "the poem of the air," Longfellow found a charm, a theme for beautiful verses. Indeed, one ever finds a child's delight in watching the big, soft, feathery flakes

falling so gently over the ground, and in wondering at the great contrasts in prolific nature.

"Out in the bosom of the air,
Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken,
Over the woodlands brown and bare,
Over the harvest-fields forsaken,
Silent and soft and slow
Descends the snow."

The white virginal snow spread out everywhere, like a great Heaven-sent veil, gives the earth the appearance of a new fairy-land, gives the imagination new scenes, new pictures, a renewed world. The young get a fresh licence for pleasure and play, and for a while can make fields, roads, streets, and towns a little empire of their own. The snow seems to prove that the world was not created exclusively for farmers, and money-makers, for endless toil and drudgery. It seems to spread the spirit of the Sabbath and innocence over the earth. Falling so gently, it unites the suggestion of wonder and mystery, with a tendency to playfulness in Nature.

Yet the frost does more than the snow to favour the sportsman, to make a winter vacation a treasure of freedom and health. It makes the shaking bog as firm as the railroad, and extends the sphere of adventure and movement over frozen lakes and rivers.

Christmas, however, is the chief attraction in the winter—an attraction unsurpassed throughout the other seasons. The great Anniversary comes to close the fading year with a blessing, with resurgent hopes, with a Christian solemnity. Christmas Eve itself, the jubilant bells on the happy morning, the midnight Mass, and the joyous "Adeste Fidelis," awaken a thousand memories, and spread peace and charity over the earth.

"Till ringing, singing on its way
The world revolves from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good-will to men."

The joyous season makes the world more like the work of God, more like a home for men. The acts of kindness inspired by the blissful days make existence seem a finer possession, make new co-partners in a great service. Christmas presents and greetings, all the visits of Santa Claus bring a freshness into our lives and turn the dark December into an oasis of human love and encouragement. Men learn to help one another, to extend their joys, to relieve the distressed. A splendid sincerity ennobles the humblest, urges them to brighten their homes, and enable their children to realise the joy and charms of the world's greatest historical event—the Nativity. The divine influence of Christmas overcomes even a Scrooge, softens the hardest hearts, and for a while bridges the chasm between rich and poor. Verily, the real emancipation of men is celebrated in the dark December days.

'... as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.''

A Christmas Dawn.

BY MARGARET CUNNINGHAM.

"Angelic choirs with joy now sing, The heavenly courts with echoes ring Glory on high to God our King."

T is Christmas Eve, and the short winter's day is drawing rapidly to a close. Over the Tyrconnell hills sweeps a bleak northern blast, driving the hardy mountain people within the shelter of their homes. Behind the cliffs of Horn Head, the evening sun is sinking, amid a blaze of riotous colouring, that lends the only touch of warmth to the winter scene. From the little town adjacent, come the sweet tones of the Angelus bell on the frosty air, bringing into the hearts of its listeners fresh remembrances of God's promise and goodness to the world. Up the narrow road leading towards the cliffs, a donkey cart laden with Christmas goods, slowly wends its way. Its two occupants bare their heads to the night wind, and recite in silence the angel's message, as the sounds of the evening chimes are wafted towards their ears. For an instant their eyes wander heavenwards, and a reverent look deepens in their glance, as they behold the power and beauty of the Great Artist, revealed in the sky above. In the blue firmament the stars are shyly peeping out their heads, their eyes glistening like pearls, as if watching sympathetically, earth's weary pilgrims marching towards their goal. Above a chain of clouds the queen of night sits in state, her cold, pure majesty resplendent in the starlight. As they withdraw their gaze, the younger of the two turns to his companion and speaks:

"Meehaul, a chara, we shall have a white Christmas after

all, despite the storm of the past few days."

"Faith, we will, Sean," replies the white-haired man who is addressed. "But I'm thinking it is the last Christmas that I shall live to see."

"Don't say that," answers Sean quickly. "You have many milestones yet to travel." But his heart misgives him as he looks down at the shrunken form of Meehaul O'Neill, the turf-carrier, enveloped in his old frieze coat that is buttoned tightly around him to keep off the chilly blast.

. "Aye, Sean. I have a presentment that it is so. But God's Will be done. Sure, I cannot complain if it is His holy Will to give me my marching orders, since I have already passed the

allotted span of three score and ten."

Sean O'Doherty utters encouraging words to drive away the shadow that seems to have fallen over his companion, and the old man relapses into silence making no further remarks. Sean cracks his whip, and urges his donkey up the steep incline leading to his home on the side of the headland. Past the sand dunes that gleamed like gold in the morning sunshine, and now lie wrapped in a robe of whiteness, they go, the cart-wheels forming tracks in the snow. In silence they follow the lonely path, their busy thoughts driving away the mood for speech. A mile of the desolate road is covered, when the sight of the mighty ocean

looms up before their view, vast and mysterious in the glory of the moon. The donkey is brought to a standstill, while its driver and Meehaul gaze across at the wonderful scene.

"The 'Capalleenee Bana' are at full gallop to-night," murmurs Meehaul. "See their forelegs ploughing the surf at light-

ning speed."

"Aye, and listen to their dying shrieks as they dash themselves into the giant arms of the Horn," responds Sean, as he pulls the collar of his coat more closely round his ears.

"How beautiful and white the world seems in its dress of snow!" muses Meehaul, as his eyes linger on the fair picture that nature stretches before his view. "Such a look of purity it wears, as if sin had fled in dismay at its approach."

"Aye," answers his companion. "Isn't it a fitting setting for Him whose Coming and Birthday we hail with gladness to-

morrow?"

They linger a little longer while Sean lights his pipe, and helps his companion to a smoke. Then the driver speaks a few words in winning tones to the donkey, and the spirited animal hastens on the way. After a stiff climb, Meehaul O'Neill spies his little cabin at a turn of the headland, sheltered behind a stack of turf. Sean brings his animal to a halt, and aids the old turf-carrier to alight. With his arms laden with his stock of goods, Meehaul wishes his neighbour the blessings of Christmastide, and remains in the snow until the cart moves along the beaten track. Sean's home lies further ahead, and as he urges on his donkey, he calls back to the forlorn figure by the wayside.

"Be sure, Meehaul, and waken early in the morning. I will call with the cart and give you a lift down the headland, so that you may be in time for first Mass in Dunfanaghy." Flourishing his whip, he shouts pleasantly a further "Happy Christmas,

Meehaul," ere the cart jolts noisily away.

Meehaul O'Neill gazes wistfully after his kindly neighbour until the sounds of the donkey cart cease in the distance. Then he turns, and walks with lagging feet and drooping head, across the snow to his cabin home. Lifting the latch he steps inside, and places his humble purchases on the kitchen table. From his little store he takes a Christmas candle, and placing it in its sconce, strikes a match and lights it. In the little aperture that serves for window, he leaves it burning, in memory of the first Christmas, to act as guide to any wayfarer who may be marooned on the headland, without food and shelter for the night. Moving towards the hearthstone he lifts the poker from the chimney corner and pulling back the dead "greeshach," dresses up the fire with fresh sods of turf, until the embers are coaxed into a warm blaze. He draws the old wooden bench near the hearth, and sitting on the rude seat, holds his chilled hands to the dancing flames, until the numbness leaves them. Full of pathos is the picture he presents, as he sits amid the stillness and silence of his poverty-stricken home. Loneliness truly typifies him, revealing him without kith or kin, to tend to his wants, or surround him with the thoughtful care that old age requires. All his life he has lived on the headland, trying to eke out a bare existence by cutting and drawing for his more fortunate neighbours in summer, the turf from the boglands near the extreme points of

the Horn; or, in the winter months, aiding the poor fishermen at their arduous toil in the little town at the foot of the cliffs. A pensive expression creeps into his faded eyes, as he feels that never again will he work as he did of yore. The sunset of his life has crept upon him, and he is glad to lay the burden down. Weary has been the yoke at times, but he has borne his lot unflinchingly, feeling now a throb of gladness, that the joys denied him here will be meted out elsewhere a hundred fold, and realizing the privations he has endured will receive their just reward in a better world.

Old age loves to linger on the past, and the old turf-carrier is no exception. His sight grows dim as he sits with clasped hands, around which brown beads are entwined, gazing into the leaping flames of the turf fire, seeing pictures of his early youth. He is once more a boy, to whom care and sorrow are unknown as he enjoys the liberty and freedom of his native cliffs. Sorrow's first shadow touches him deeply when he finds himself alone, at an early age bereft of father and mother. Yet time is the great wound healer, and his boyhood and early manhood pass, leaving him in his prime, strong and able, labouring diligently at his hard but honest toil. The love of Seumas O'Donnell's daughter warms and gladdens his lonely heart, and he lives again those joyous years, ere Death stepped in to rob him of his greatest treasure, snapping his heartstrings in twain. The fair, sweet face of his love looms up before his eyes, and he thanks God now that her spirit fled, ere she realized what has been his portion down the years. Her presence seems to hover by his side, whispering of glad days that are dead vividly reminding him of the long ago. He sits wrapped in deepest thought, while the hours pass by unheeded. Lower and lower droops his head on his breast, until his senses are aroused by seeing a glorious light illuminating the little room. He hears the sweetest voice ever heard on earth, whispering in his ears to rise and come to a feast that is waiting for his presence. Meehaul passes trembling hands across his wondering eyes, and struggling bravely into a sitting posture, falls back into unconsciousness upon his wooden seat.

When the weakness passes, the old turf-carrier opens his eyes to strange events occurring round him. His old age has disappeared and his lost youth has been restored. Through his veins he feels the hot blood coursing rapidly while his little home seems glorified. A beautiful form, in shining raiment is standing near, with a heavenly smile on his countenance, and his hands outstretched in greeting. Meehaul's gaze grows fascinated as he sees his tattered clothes slowly changing into a wonderful robe glittering like the sun. Soft and low the stranger's whisper, "Follow me," reaches his wondering brain, and Meehaul finds himself in the wake of his guide who leads him through the cottage door. Stretching out his wings, the immortal being holds up the turf-carrier, as if he were a featherweight, and the two soar noiselessly through miles of ether, past fleecy clouds sailing in the sky, until heaven's portals open wide at their approach. Meehaul is in raptures as he follows his companion through the opening gates, at which a sentinel, resplendent as the morning star, is

standing, with gleaming sword in hand. He salutes Meehaul's guide in silence, and looks benignly on the poor turf-carrier as he passes through. Along corridors paved with precious stones, and under arches overhanging with myriads of topax lights, Meehaul

is led until a magnificent court is reached.

The sweetest music Meehaul has ever heard now breaks upon his ears. A company of angelic forms with golden instruments in their hands, appear in view playing celestial airs. Meehaul looks at his companion with mute inquiry in his eyes, and the angel bends low and whispers, "They are welcoming you to heavenly regions." Dazed with joy the turf-carrier gazes with bated breath at the beauty of the angels' faces. His companion does not stop, but passes on, leading him through courts more beautiful still. "Is this heaven?" Mechaul whispers. His guide smilingly bends his head and says: "You haven't reached what God has set apart for you." Through gardens flagrant with choicest blooms and through groves of ever-increasing wonders, Meehaul goes, beholding fresh beauties at every turn. "See the Christmas dawn in Heaven's dome," murmurs his companion. "The heavenly citizens are busy this morning preparing for the Birthday of their King, and you will be present at the banquet. I got strict injunctions to bring you in time for the feast." Fearing to speak lest he should break the spell, and find himself in his mountain cabin, Meehaul humbly bows his head.

At last the "Great White Throne" is reached. Looks of mingled awe and ecstasy dawn in Meehaul's countenance as he gazes upon the Face of God. All the beauties he has seen, fade into insignificance, in comparison with the ravishing glory that emanates from Heaven's King. The longings of his soul are stilled to rest in the loving glance he receives from his Creator. A voice of ineffable sweetness bids him draw near, and he listens to words of praise that send thrills of gladness through his being. "Well done, good Meehaul. For as thou suffered and endured much for My Sake on thy earthly pilgrimage, so now will I reward

thee. Receive thy crown.'

Rising from His Throne, God places upon his brow a diadem of gems, and at that instant the Queen of Heaven looks graciously into his eyes, with a glad welcome shining in her own. "You have loved my Rosary well," she says, "and now you will be one of my most favoured children in Heaven." Poor Meehaul is overcome with happiness, and as the angel leads him from the Great Presence, he holds his companion tightly lest it should prove a dream. To a wonderful palace of glittering stones his guide now leads him. Myriads of saints wearing crowns on their brows, move quickly to and fro through the spacious halls, while at the side of each an angelic form hovers. Upon a golden dais the angel places Meehaul. Suddenly on the heavenly air rise exquisite strains of music as the myriads sound their golden trumpets and gather round him. "They are honouring your coronation," the angel whispers. "All these glorious beings will be your future companions through endless ages, helping you to enjoy the delights of Heaven." "Oh!" says poor Meehaul, remembrance stabbing him with sudden pain. "What business has a poor turf-carrier amid such happy scenes, and how shall I live again in my humble cabin after tasting of these delights? "

"Don't you realize," answers the angel, "your earthly pilgrimage is at an end, and you have entered into the joys of Paradise. Look at all these joyous forms, and you will recognise a vast number. They are from your own green hillsides, where the sod they trod, was blessed by the grace of God that ever shone in their hearts. See among the multitudes some with crimson stars in their crowns. They are your country's martyrs who suffered for love of God and Fatherland." The angel now reveals himself. "I am your guardian spirit," he continues, "watching over you from the instant you opened your eyes on God's bright sunshine, until this moment. I shall be at your side for all Eternity. These other bright forms moving among your heavenly countrymen are angel guardians, too. Like myself, they have watched their charges with loving care, until the hour struck to take them home. And now appears the Son of God in our midst to celebrate His Birthday." A great burst of rapturous music swells upon the air as Christ Himself arrives among His faithful soldiers. The gaze of the Saviour lingers long and lovingly on Meehaul's transfigured countenance, until the poor turf-carrier feels his awkwardness departing and gladly realizes Port is reached at last.

In its far away home the Christmas dawn is breaking. Its crimson radiance spreads over the eastern sky heralding the approach of the great Feast. Sean O'Doherty rises quickly in his home on the Horn, and hastily dresses himself. "If I don't hurry," he says to his wife, "Meehaul O'Neill will be thinking I have forgotten him, and will go off to Mass alone." He goes to the haggard and harnesses the donkey to the cart. With the peace of Christmas in his face and in his heart, he sets out for Dunfanaghy. As he draws near the old turf-carrier's cabin, he is surprised to see the light of the Christmas candle still gleaming

through the window.

"Meehaul is not astir yet," he murmurs to himself, "he must have overslept." Alighting from his cart, he leaves the donkey standing on the roadside, and steps across to Meehaul's door. Crossing the threshold of the little home, he sees the candle burning low in its socket. Beside the dead fire the old man is sitting motionless on his wooden bench, with a rapt expression on his face, and his brown Rosary beads clasped tightly in his fingers. Sean approaches softly with hushed breath and a feeling of awe, realizing he is in the presence of Death. Calm and peaceful is the countenance of his old friend, and as Sean gazes upon it, he recalls the words of the old man uttered the night before. He sinks on his knees in prayer, praying earnestly for the old turf-carrier, whose spirit, indeed, has flown to enjoy his Christmas in a better home.

When Leaves have Fallen.

BY THOMAS KELLY.

THE lane, straggling but sheltered, seemed more inviting than the even monotony of the read. Its rustic gate—constructed of five poles fastened to a pair of thick uprights by ten worn-out horse-shoes—appeared to suggest invitation rather than repulsion. And so I stepped over the bars, on to the thick carpet of rotting grass and leaves, noting casually that there was

no notice about threatening prosecution for the trespasser.

In the middle of the wide but uneven way two deep ruts marked the recent passage of the farmer's field-carts as they lumbered home and cantered back in their mission of securing the last fruits of vanished autumn. The wheels, aided by the rain, had churned the clay they displaced into mud. Stooping down I looked for traces of animal life, for there had come to my mind that story of the critic who held that the most graphic line in literature was: "The muck was yeasty with worms." But my search was in vain. Thick wisps of hay and straw still clung to the over-hanging branches along the lane, tarrying signals of the piled carts which passed here a few months agone. The sturdy hawthorns still held a proud display of red, but the few blackberries which yet lingered showed traces of the havoc of wind and rain—the purple blue of their once juicy berries having gone to dye the moss-covered stones of the walls which supported the parent stem.

A gap in the trees lining the lane showed a huge potato-field, in which a flock of rooks—those "Monks of the feathered people," as Lord Lytton calls them—were quietly sharing the spoils which somebody's potato-lifter had, in spite of all its patents, failed to bring to the surface. The birds in a little arc nearest the wall flew away a short distance as I passed. Had I only been carrying a gun every solitary one of these rooks would have fled out of range, so

well are they aware of man's lordship over creation!

I reached the end of the lane and crossed another amateur gate, this time constructed of poles let into holes in two pillars of masonry. From the top of one of the pillars hung a single briar stem, to which clung three leaves, one of which was a rich red, another a dirty brown, while the third showed traces of its original green merged into yellow borders. I thought it a very pretty effect, but my pleasure was marred by the recollection of something I had recently read. My mentor was one of those tantalising inquisitive gentlemen, the type of which not only wants to know the why of everything, but insists on scattering his knowledge broadcast. He had discovered why leaves change colours in autumn, and was anxious that everybody else should know. He pointed out that the crimson in the blackberry leaves was due to the great increase in quantity of anthocyan, a pigment which takes the place of the green colouring matter, another pigment named chlorophyll. There are lipochrome pigments, which differ from anthocyan in that they are insoluble in cell-sap and unaffected by ammonia, while one of these, named xanthophyll, is responsible for the hues of the crocus and the daffodil. A reinforcement of anthocyan pigments in association with the lipochromes produces the hues of tulips and pansies. When chlorophyll is superimposed on anthocyan the neutralising effect gives a purple-black leaf, but nobody has yet, it appears, been able to discover why white leaves are found in places

fully exposed to the light.

I felt wearied by my naturalist, and so I passed on from the briar leaves. Why cannot those people deal in ordinary words when they start talking on botanical matters? Are they just trying to keep their science aloof from the common mortals? A bare sycamore stood in front of me, its summer garb lying in crumpled brown fragments about its base. And why do the leaves fall? The fall is prompted by desire for life instead of death. All leaves that die do not fall—a dead branch or twig will often retain its withered leaves throughout the winter. I will let one of the botanists who shuns "technical terms" give his explanation: "The whole thing rests upon the question of water. Below the temperature of 42 degrees F. the absorption of water and soluble earth-salts by most plants is an impossibility, and if the leaves were retained in the circumstance the loss of moisture by evaporation—which, of course, would go on to a certain extent whenever the sun shone—would represent a serious loss. To get over this difficulty, as the temperature grows less in autumn, the tree gradually denies the leaf its water-supply by forming at the base of the leaf-stalk a layer of corky cells, which slowly severs the connection of stalk and twig until, with the weight of the leaf itself, the fall occurs." The evergreens retain their leaves because the latter, being thick, part with very little moisture during the dead season.

Around me a drove of cattle were sniffing distrustfully at the coarse-looking, sedgy grass which the farmer assures one is too sour for food until the frost has "sweetened" it. But he can give no explanation of his contention that cattle thrive best when left out-of-doors all the winter, seeing that so much of what they eat must go to replenish bodily heat. . . . A stile brought me into a field of still rich green, the aftergrowth of a late meadow. To right and left were fields of stubble in which the crows were busy—what lessons in economy they preach to the farmer who wishes to take notice? In front of me stretched a rich slope of country, of which

the poet of summer might have sung:-

But to-day the orchards were in the sleep of early winter, and on the breeze there came to one an odour of fresh clay mixed with "the dull flavour of decay." In one of the fields a farmer had taken advantage of the weather to plough his stubble. His sturdy team, with heads bent low, forged steadily onwards, while at his heels followed a flock of the ubiquitous crows with a solitary seagull in their midst. Near by stood a snug-looking cottage, having about it that air of comfort which early winter brings to the farmstead—the piled stacks of turf, corn and hay serve to suggest the cosiness of the homestead without emphasising the months of storm for which they are a preparation.

My path lay along the slope of a gentle hill divided off into fields securely separated from one another by solid walls topped by high hedges of hawthorn. As I neared one field there came to me the clear-cut notes of a well-played flute—veritable fairy music, only the air was Irish. Had I stumbled across a corner of Arcady in Erin? I crossed the stile to discover the musician. Two men were busy filling sacks from a pit of potatoes, and the flautist should have been helping them! Instead, he sat on top of a pile of sacks, manipulating the flute, and perhaps his two companions did the work of three while their ears were thus soothed. We exchanged greetings, and I was passing on, but the musician called after me. "If you meet a man with a greeny hat," he counselled me, "coming against you from the house above, don't go saying anything to him about me being playing the fife when I should be picking spuds."

The path led me away from the "house above" and onwards towards a land growing less prosperous with every mile I covered. Proof of the effects of environment was afforded me in the less comfortable nature of the houses which I was passing—on the rich land of the plain which I was now crossing the dreariness of rocky fields was reflected in the drabness of walls and roofs. Here, too, the men seemed to have finished their work for the season—everything around seems to suggest that the time of rest has arrived. As

a homely poetess has put it:—

"There's silence in the harvest field;
And blackness in the mountain glen,
And clouds that will not pass away
From the hill-tops for many a day;
And stillness round the nomes of men."

THE EMBLEM OF OUR QUEEN.

"And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."—(Apocalypse, xii, 1.)

MoonLight on mountains, and in dusky dells, Where fall tinkling fountains, where ocean swells: In mazy woodlands where winds go astray, Where the hoary oak stands, where blue-bells sway. Near palaces blest by its silver light Poor hamlets nest in the shimmering white Of the mystic sign of the star-crowned Queen, That mirrors the sunshine wherever seen. The Mother of Pity, watching the vale, Shines over the city, and where waves wail; Brightens life's dark night with light from God's face, And, purer than moonlight, sends sinners grace; Though robed in sunbeams, with the moon for throne, Her sceptre still gleams with Love's light alone!

M. BARRY O'DELANY.

A Christmas Night at Glenmalure

By M. BARRY O'DELANY.

A Sthe soundless tyres of John Edwards' motor car rolled through the lonely heart of lovely Wicklow, in the deepening dusk, the gleaming head-lights turned the fallen snow to gold where, an instant later, the shadows from the taillight stained it red. It was Christmas Eve, and he was on his way to Dublin to spend a fortnight with his old schoolfellow, Dr. Michael Butler, to whose pretty, blue-eyed sister, Mary—commonly called "Molly"—he was engaged. She was one-andtwenty, just four years younger than himself, and of so sweet and gentle a nature that everybody said the wealthy young landowner had caught a prize, and was getting the best girl in Ireland for a wife. As the car sped on in the midst of a silence broken only by the throbbing of the engine, and the moaning of the wind, his fur-gloved hands guided it unerringly in spite of the gathering darkness and the snow that fell heavier every moment. It was his native county, and the country for miles round had been familiar to him since childhood. Indeed, it was a frequent boast with him that he could have found his way all over Wicklow with his eyes shut; the dear old mountains not excepted.

The car was going at a break-neck speed, and every yard covered brought him nearer to the girl he loved, and to his old friend's hearty Christmas welcome. Yet there was a frown upon his handsome face at that moment, and an ill-tempered gleam in

his usually soft brown eyes.

"Confound that dispensation!" was the petulant exclamation

that escaped from him more than once.

The dispensation was in fact the only obstacle to his marriage; for Mary Butler was a Catholic and he a Protestant. Apart from the delay it must occasion, he hated the very idea of Mary applying for a dispensation. The mere thought was like a thorn in his side; not, however, that he considered one religion better than another, or that he had any particular aversion to Catholicism. Indeed, he rather prided himself on what he called his absence of bigotry, and often said that the "Roman Catholic religion would be all right if it were not for the priests, but that sooner than give his conscience into the keeping of one of them by, for instance, going to Confession, he would turn atheist to-morrow!" And he avoided all intimacy with members of their cloth, although he was quite sure he had no prejudice against the faith they followed. His dislike to a dispensation sprang from a wild, unreasoning jealousy of which he was the slave. To use his own expression, he would have "chucked all the churches in the world to the winds for love of Molly," and yet she made nothing of keeping him waiting "for endless ages: dilly-dallying and shilly-shallying about a dispensation." Worse still—and this was the real bitter bit—she was ready to throw him over altogether if by any chance it was refused. "Oh! confound it for a dispensation!" Why on earth could not Roman Catholics do like hundreds of others, who also call themselves Christians, and, if it was more convenient, just leave religion out of their matrimonial affairs altogether, and

simply sign their names at the nearest registry office. What a fuss about nothing! They might have been man and wife already but for the dispensation; and again he said, "Confound it!" And the oftener he said it the more angry he grew; till in a final burst he swore that, come what would, and though the powers of hell were leagued against him, he would move Heaven and earth to marry her without "that confounded dispensation; a mere relic of mediæval superstition!" And, as will be seen, he kept his word.

It was quite dark by this time, and well as he knew the way, John Edwards was obliged to slacken speed somewhat, lest he should drive his car into some danger hidden by the blinding snow. And, just as he did this, he fancied he heard a voice shouting to him to stop. Wondering if he was about to be held up by the police for having exceeded the regulation speed limit a few moments earlier, he slowed down.

"Hallo!-hal-lo! stop-st-o-op!"

There could be no mistake this time. Someone was calling to him from the darkness. An instant later and a tall, black figure came within the light of the motor lamps. It was that of a clean-shaven, white-haired old man, who pushed a bicycle with one hand, and made a speaking trumpet of the other, for the snow-storm was at its height just them.

"Excuse my want of ceremony," said the new comer, speaking in jerks, like one who had been running for some time; "but I was on my way to see a dying woman when my bicycle broke down. As the case is urgent, I thought I might venture to ask you for a lift, although it will mean turning back. The woman

lives near Glenmalure—an out-of-the-way spot."

"I passed it as I came along," young Edwards answered, springing to the ground. "No excuses needed, doctor; I am only too glad to be of use;" and, having fastened the broken bicycle to the back seat, he helped the stranger to the one beside his

own, and wheeled the car round.

It meant giving up all hope of dining with his Dublin friends that night; but he was a humane man at heart. Besides, as he said to himself in a half shamefaced way, it was just the sort of thing sweet Mary Butler would like him to do; especially on Christmas Eve, or, rather, on Christmas morning as it would be by the time it was all over. Conversation was practically impossible in the storm. The old man sat with bowed head, as if lost in thought, while his companion was obliged to concentrate all his attention on the road before him if they were to reach their destination without accident. At length he felt a hand upon his arm. The stranger was pointing to where a blurred light glimmered on their left. Edwards understood and brought the snorting motor to a stand; for, even in the daytime, it would have been a difficult task to drive it across the field at the further end of which stood the cabin from whose window the light shone. Not wishing to delay his conductor any longer, the old man would have gone the rest of the way alone. But John Edwards would not hear of this, and they walked together in the direction of the light. When they reached it Edwards thumped with his gloved hand upon the door. It was opened on the instant by a hollowcheeked man, who, although he could not succeed in making himself heard was evidently thanking God for their arrival; to judge by the way his anxious face had cleared and brightened the moment he saw them.

As he shut out the storm again, that raved and roared as if angry at the rebuff, a woman whose eyes were red with weeping, and who appeared to be his wife, came from an inner room, and as the old man hurriedly entered it, curtsied deep. After some moments of sorrowful silence he came back and beckoned them all to follow him.

The sick woman lay upon a miserable bed, beside which a candle burned upon a rickety table, over which John Edwards' late fellow traveller was bending. The dying woman's parents, as he rightly guessed them to be, knelt down and began reciting the Confiteor, and, after a slight hesitation, Edwards knelt down too. As a matter of fact he was too bewildered to do anything else. He, priest-hater though he was, had gone miles out of his way that Christmas Eve night, to bring one of them to a dying woman!

"Domine non sum dignus!"

And at each repetition the kneeling parents struck their breasts, and their dying daughter did the same. "My Lord and my God!" she exclaimed, gazing with adoring love upon the Sacred Host. Then she closed her eyes and lay silent. When she opened them again it was Christmas morning; but the light with which it

dawned for her was not of earthly brightness.

The storm was over when the aged priest and John Edwards remounted, and the motor resumed its interrupted journey. But their progress was necessarily slow, the snow lay so deep upon the ground. However, as they talked a great deal on the way, the time passed quickly enough. Nor did the acquaintance end when at length they parted. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that it was largely owing to the intimacy that followed, that when John Edward's and Mary Butler were married, some weeks later, no dispensation was needed. Nor, in the years to come, was there any story their children loved so much to hear as that which told of how their father kept the oath he swore one Christmas night, and by which he bound himself to marry their dear mother without a dispensation, even though all the powers of Hell were leagued against him!



1 Ocaob na noolas.

Maipe—Oia viö, a caitini.

Peis ir Opio-Ois'r Muipe ouit, a maine.

p.—nac áluinn an aimpin í?

M.—Ir their an aimpin i. Má řearann rí 50 otí an Noolais beió an t-áo opainn.

0.—Searocaio, le consnam Oé. An mait leat an noolais a maine?

M.—Ir bheat an rao tiom í. Ir reann tiom an Nootais ná baon t náteile benbliain.

Ď.—1r reapp le zaċ aoinne, ir σόċa, aċ amain na σαοίne zo

bruit an choide reocta azur caitte ionta.

0.—Maire, ná bac 120 ran. Ní riú tháct opta. Oá otaza ainzeal anuar or na flaitearaib cúca bead amhar aca ain. Ir beaz pleiriún a bíonn aca aon uain.

M.—Map rin réin, ir voca 50 pabavap óz uaip éizin azur

Jun cuip ceacona Noolas átar an a schoiótib.

p.—D'réroip 50 mbeimir réin cormail leó lá éisin. 0.—Náp leisió Oia é! D'reapp liom beit mapb.

M.—Öepa, ná bac 140. Ni řeavap an mbero mopán cápcaí veara le ráil um Novlais.

p.—Maire, rioc opta man cántaí. Ir ruat tiom 120. Il aon pioc capavair as baint leo.

b.—azur cao a beao azat na n-ineao?

ρ.— Leaban beat σear a cimeáσραιnn ir a léigrinn anoir ir apír agur a beað i scómnuí asam man cuimneacán an an scapaio σο cup cúsam é.

M.—Azur nac bréavrá an puv céavona vo véanam leir an

scanta?

β. – Mi řéaσpainn Díonn na mílte aca ann, zač ceann aca zo σίρεας man a céile, ir na βέαργαί a bíonn ορτα! Ιγ απίλιο α συιργισίγ γεαρχ ορτω-γα in ineao γοίλιγ α ταβαίρτ σοπ. Díonn capadar ir comluadar γα leaβαρ δίζ i zcomnuí.

0.—0'féidip an ceapt do beit azat, a peiz. Ap aon cuma caitteap an iomad aipzid ap pad zac nodlaiz anpo i néipinn ap cáptaí Zallda nac mbíonn ionta ac opabaoil cainte azur

pictiuni nac fiú réacaint onta.

m.—ní řeadan an mbeið ciall azur cuizring az muíncin na hÉineann aon uain.

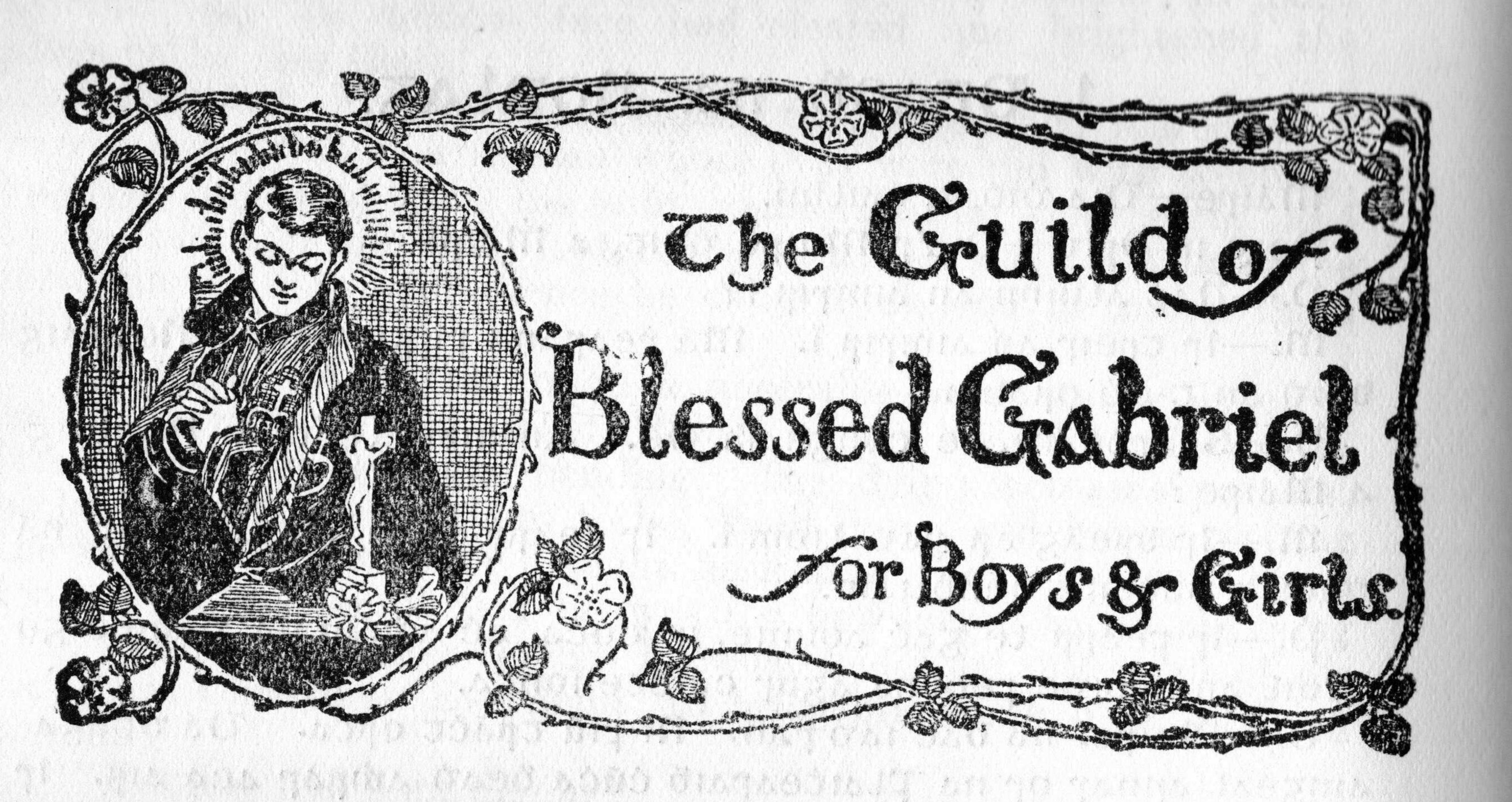
ρ.— θειό, α Μάιρε, ας ςαιτριό γιαο απ ειαίι γαπ α ceannac 50 οαορ. Τά ειαίι α τεαςτ εύςα αξυγ πί θειό γιαο 1 ξεοώπιμί αξ ευρ αιρξιο 1 βρόεαί ο πα ηξαίι.

M.—Bell, caitread-ra beit as imteact. So ocusaid dia

Moolais maicoib!

p. azur d.— Zupab amtaio ouic, a maine!

muiris na mona.



A Literary Circle for Young Readers of "The Cross."

Conducted by FRANCIS.

RULES OF THE GUILD.

- I. The Guild of Blessed Gabriel is a literary circle open to boys and girls under 18 years of age.
- II. The members will be expected to spread devotion to Blessed Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, by practising the virtues of purity, charity, and truth, and by living lives worthy of him who is to be their model and their guide.
- III. They will at all times observe the conditions under which the competitions will be held.
- IV. They will endeavour to bring as many new members as they can into the Guild of Blessed Gabriel.

How swiftly the years glide by when there is work in plenty to be done and when the red blood of good health is coursing in our veins! It seems but a month ago since we were gathered here to wish one another the blessings of the holy Christmas season, and yet—here is Christmas coming over the hills to us again with its never-dying and ever-beautiful message of peace, kindness, good-will and gladness. There is nothing new that I can say to you, my young friends, to-day: nothing I have not said in the years that are past. But, even as Christmas is ever

young, like Him Who gave it to us nearly two thousand years ago, so also are its greetings and salutations and wishes ever fresh and sweet. I wish that all the peace and gladness and joy that come at Christmas may be in your hearts and homes, that they may abide with you all through the years, and accompany you, when the day's work is done, into the radiance and the glory of the Christ-Child's eternal Home.

MY POSTBAG

Although several of my oldest and dearest friends seem to have forgotten me this month, still my postbag is well filled, and the many messages that have come to me from every corner of the land are heartening and sincere enough to make me the happiest man in Eirinn. One of the most welcome letters I have received for a long time comes from Brigid Barrett and her brother Michael. It tells of many a month's yearning for membership of the Guild and the strange story (which I cannot disclose here) of how a little Dublin girl became acquainted with our activities here. Little do we know how many eyes are watching us as we talk and play and tell our stories and sing our songs here in the Guild of Blessed Gabriel. However, I have great pleasure in welcoming Brigid and Michael, and I trust they will remain with us for many a day. Mary Rennie breaks a three months' silence (or is it longer?) with a very nice letter which pleased me very much, but some of which it would never do to publish. What has become of Nellie, or has she forsaken us entirely? A welcome new member is Frances Burke, who promises to bring her sister Anna into the Guild next month. I trust they will come to us often and try to carry off some of our prizes. The Brigidine Convent, Mountrath, never fails to send representatives to the Guild, and they have always something interesting to say when they arrive. This time two new members have come-Ena Hayes and Mollie Mordaunt—and they are welcome as any one has ever been. I think they are going to be faithful members. Our staunch friend, B. M. O'Neill, is with us again, as keenly interested as ever in the welfare of the Guild and in the work of its young members. We are glad that she has recovered from her severe illness. John Cullen, K.B.S., Carlow. brings five new members into the Guild this month, each one of whom promises to write me a personal letter for the January Number. Their names are Jerry Nolan, Peter Betton, Edward Barry, Christopher Walsh and James Doyle, and they are all Knights of the Blessed Sacrament. I give them a hearty welcome for their promoter's sake and for their own. Chuir an litir do scríobh Treasa Nic Mhaghnuis chugam áthas mor ar mo chroide. Tá an Ghaelig go maith aici agus tá súil agam go scríobhfaidh si go mi nic chugam. Is maith an cailin i! Eilis Ni Mhaoil Eoin need not have apologised for her letter. I was delighted with it, and proud to know that in her heart there is the spirit of uncompromising patriotism. She need never fear that such a letter as hers will be thrown aside by Francis. From Corduff School, Co. Dublin (a famous spot) come three new members whose names are Sophie Healy, Katie Rogers, and Rita Murtagh—all welcome as Santa Claus himself. Mary Gildea is a new member from Loreto Convent, Letterkenny, and I need hardly say that I am glad to have her in the Guild. Her essay is not suitable for the Christmas Competitions, but I am sure she will compete again, and bring several of her school companions into our midst. Another new and welcome member is Maggie Rodgers, who From the other end of Ireland our dear friend, Hannie Ward, of Killaloe, sends a long, delightful letter, which I wish I could publish in full. She has unstinted praise for the poems of Rita and Nina Carlos, Lillian Nally, Eilis Ni Riain, and all the other songsters of the Guild. Her own verses show a marked improvement, but the piece is too long. She will do much better before Christmas comes again. Just at the last moment, as I am about to send my bundle of Guild literature to the printer, in rush Bessie Reid, R. F. Redmond and Mary MacDonnell. I trust they will make up for the start they gave me by coming early in future. Don't forget that the January letters are to reach me by the first post on December 12th.

Bethlehem,

Loving and meek, the Holy Child
Lies by the side of Mary mild.
All, all adore this Babe divine,
Who seems to whisper "My Heart is thine."
Holy Saint Joseph a vigil keeps,
Whilst Jesus in Mary's arms sleeps.
Then shepherds see an angel bright,
Surrounded by a glorious light.
They come to adore the Child-King, saying
"Gloria in excelsis,"
They come to adore the Child-King, praying
"In excelsis Deo."

HANNIE WARD.

The Children's Song.

To Mary's Son the children sing:—
"A Happy Birthday to our King!"
Asking Him to bless their friend
With every blessing He could send.
Hear their voices sweet and clear
Singing on His infant-ear,
Chasing every childish tear—
Hail! Babe of Bethlehem.

Child-god, raise Thy baby hand,
Blessing our dear native land;
Bless the hearts of those we love,
Lead them to Thy throne above
Join we soon the starry throng.
Hail! Infant Jesus, is our song,
As Thy Birthday speeds along—
Hail! Babe of Bethlehem.

B. M. O'NEILL.

51011 1111 Savice.

Sweet is the summer breeze that blows
The pink-lipped petals off the blushing rose,
And o'er hill and valley hurries along
Murmuring softly a joyous song,
A joyous song.

Fresh is the mountain breeze that sighs When the last faint trace of daylight dies, And tunes beneath the pale-faced moon A silver lute with liquid croon,

With liquid croon.

Pure is the breeze that is born at dawn When the sleeping beauty of night is gone, And hopeful its message of radiant love Burning for ever in Heaven above.

In Heaven above.

But sweeter and fresher and purer by far,
Is the Breath that pilots across the bar
The vessels freighted with human life
To a beautiful harbour unsullied by strife,
To a beautiful harbour unsullied by strife.

RITA CARLOS.

IMPORTANT

(1) All newcomers will please write a personal note to Francis apart from their competition papers, asking to be admitted to membership of the Guild. (2) Always put your name and address on your competition paper, whether you send a letter or not. (3) Orders for copies of "The Cross" and all other business letters are to be addressed to the Manager.

THE AWARDS

I.—Members over 12 years.

Prizes for the best Christmas contributions have been awarded to George A. England, 7 Grove Park, Rathmines, Dublin, and Hannie Ward, Convent School Killaloe, Co. Clare.

II.—For Members under 12 years of age.

Prizes for the best letters to Santa Claus have been awarded to Minnie Bergin, Convent School, Mountrath, Queen's Co., and Teresa. Carson, Glendore, Crawfordsburn, Co. Down.

JANUARY COMPETITIONS

For Members over 12 and under 18 years of age.

A handsome prize will be awarded for the best short essay on the New Year.

II.—Members under 12 years.

A prize will be given for the best New Year Message to Francis.

Competitors will please remember the following rules:—All competition papers must be certified by some responsible person to be the unaided and original work of the sender. They must have attached to them the coupon to be found in this issue (one coupon will be sufficient for all the members of a family). They must be sent so as to reach the office of "The Cross" not later than December 12th. All letters to be addressed:—Francis, c/o "The Cross," St. Paul's Retreat, Mount Argus, Dublin.

The Vision of St. Catherine of Sienna.

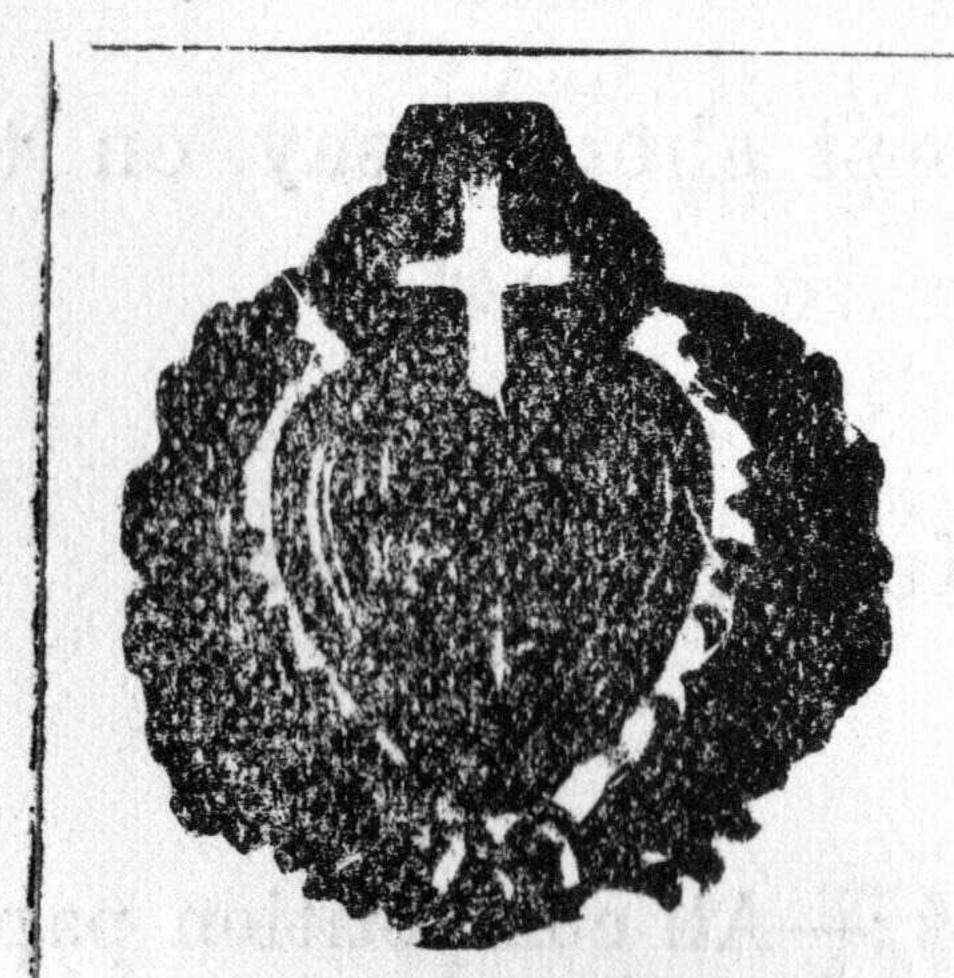
ONCE, in an ecstasy of prayer,
The saint beheld a vision fair;
Ah! could it be the Saviour sweet
Would thus His humble servant greet?
Lo! there He stood, a dazzling sight,
Within His hands two vases bright—
The saint from meditation woke,
As unto her these words He spoke:
"Here, in this vase of gold doth rest
Communions, Sacramental, blest;
In silver vase I place with care
Communions spiritual, rare;
And this to show how pleased I feel
With hearts who seek Me with such zeal,
To these, My children here below,
The choicest blessings I bestow."

I. B

Clean Fun.

We have much pleasure in announcing that two books of genuine Irish humour by Brian O'Higgins will be published before Christmas by Messrs. Whelan & Son, 17 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin. One is "Fun o' the Road," containing 42 stories of Murt Finnegan and the Nigger Flynn, two very wide-awake tramps. This book will be published at 3s. 6d.; post free, 3s. 10d. The other book is "Billy to Jack," containing some 32 chats in the chimney corner on matters of every-day interest. The fun of both books is clean; natural and laughter-provoking. "Billy to Jack" will sell at 2s. 6d., post free, 2s. 10d.

In addition to these two volumes, Messrs. Whelan are bringing out four booklets of Christmas greeting verse by the same author—three in English and one in Irish—at 6d. each.



COUPON

Blessed Gabriel's Guild

THE CROSS. DEC., 1919

His Holiness Pope Benedict XV. bestows the Apostolic Benediction on The Cross and praises its work

The following is a translation of a letter addressed to the Editor of "THE CROSS" by His Eminence Cardinal Gasparri, Secretary of State:—

> The Vatican, Secretariate of State of His Holiness March 9, 1918.

REVEREND FATHER,

The Sovereign Pontiff has received with pleasure the numbers of the monthly periodical—"THE CROSS"—which, collected into an elegant volume, you have piously presented at His Throne in token of your devout and filial homage, at the same time begging the Apostolic Blessing for the contributors to this excellent publication and for its readers.

I am happy to inform you that His Holiness, grateful for your pious tribute, has been pleased to grant with paternal charity the blessing you request, so that the periodical continuing with increasing zeal its salutary apostolate in the bosom of Christian families may rescue from shipwreck ever increasing numbers of the brethren and may bind them indissolubly to the Cross of Christ, the sole plank of salvation and of life, the symbol of peace, and the source of all true civil progress.

In conveying to your Reverence these gracious sentiments of the Pontiff, I have pleasure in subscribing myself,

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

P. CARD. GASPARI